



GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
Office of the Prime Minister

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Dr. Lawrence Bacow
President of Harvard University
Office of the President
Massachusetts Hall,
Cambridge MA 02138

Dear President Bacow,

On 26 November 2018 – eleven months ago – my Government's Ambassador to the United States of America, Sir Ronald Sanders, wrote to you formally on behalf of the government and people of Antigua and Barbuda, concerning the indisputable fact that it was a bequest of Isaac Royall Jr to Harvard College in 1781 that was used to create the first endowed professorship of law in 1815, leading to the establishment of the Harvard Law School.

Most regrettably you did not reply to Ambassador Sanders, despite that fact that his letter was the second to the President of Harvard University. The first was sent to your predecessor, Professor Drew Faust, on 10 October 2016.

In both instances, Ambassador Sanders recounted the well-known and historically recorded facts that Isaac Royall derived his wealth from the labour of persons he enslaved on a plantation in Antigua and Barbuda. The bequest to Harvard came from the proceeds of the plantation in Antigua and from the exploitation and sale of human beings that Royall regarded as chattel. Professor Janet Halley, on assumption of the Royall Professorship in 2006, was right to acknowledge in her inaugural address that Isaac Royall's slaves "are intrinsically bound, if you will, to the grant that established the Royall Chair".

Ambassador Sanders pointed out that, consequently, the reputation that Harvard enjoys internationally is intertwined with the dark legacy of Royall's Antigua slaves who died in oppression, uncompensated for their lives in slavery and their death in cruelty. In this context, he sought a genuine effort by Harvard to make amends to the people of Antigua for the gains Harvard enjoyed at the expense of their kinfolk.

Specifically, in his letter to you of 26 November 2018, Ambassador Sanders proposed assistance from Harvard to Antigua and Barbuda in the field of education as a form of making amends to the country. He advised that, today, Antigua and Barbuda is a small country with an economy of only \$1.5 billion. Our struggle to develop our country is inextricably linked to education. It is for that reason that my government has spent hard-earned and scarce resources on establishing a campus of the University of the West Indies on Antigua. The education of our people is key to unleashing their capacity across all economic sectors, improving the quality of life of the nation and its ability to participate in global development.

He also noted that Other Universities, which have also been beneficiaries of the proceeds of slavery in the Caribbean, have — and are - making amends; most recently, the University of Glasgow in the United Kingdom has provided resources to the University of the West Indies.

Two days ago, Princeton Theological Seminary, in what it called *“an act of repentance”* announced that it is setting aside \$27.6 million to pay reparations for its historical ties to slavery. Earlier this year, Georgetown University students voted to raise their own tuition to pay reparations, and this month the Virginia Theological Seminary created a fund for reparations.

Yet, Harvard remains silent.

As Head of Government of Antigua and Barbuda, I have now decided to write you officially to advise that we consider Harvard’s failure to acknowledge its obligations to Antigua and the stain it bears from benefitting from the blood of our people as shocking if not immoral.

Reparation from Harvard would compensate for its development on the backs of our people. Reparation is not aid; it is not a gift; it is compensation to correct the injustices of the past and restore equity. Harvard should be in the forefront of this effort.

I sincerely hope that you will not continue to ignore my Government’s outreach and that you would agree to a meeting between representatives of the University’s Council and my Government to determine how best Harvard could make amends to Antigua through assistance to the Campus of the University of the West Indies at Five Islands on Antigua.

I look forward to hearing from you with the urgency that this situation clearly merits.

Sincerely



Honourable Gaston Browne M.P.
Prime Minister and Minister of Finance